

**1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.**

“Publishing Books for Children” is an interdisciplinary project in which students write, illustrate, perform, and donate children’s books. The project is developed in accordance with the guidelines for Service-Learning, a philosophy and practice that provides meaningful service to the community while improving student learning and fostering civic responsibility. In Service-Learning, each class performs an aspect of the project that reinforces its curriculum goals while fulfilling a community need. Service-Learning projects follow a four-phase structure including, preparation, action, reflection, and celebration.

In the preparation phase of “Publishing Books for Children,” language arts students learn to analyze a genre for its intended audience, purpose, and writing situation. They also meet with a childcare professional to learn about the characteristics of effective children’s books. After this informative discussion, students compile their findings to create a rubric for analyzing the effectiveness of the children’s books they intend to write. Meanwhile, visual art students learn effective techniques for illustrating children’s books. Drama students learn about appropriate scenery, costumes, makeup, and performance techniques for entertaining children. Parenting students learn about child development and managing child behavior. Foods students acquire the culinary, planning, and serving skills necessary to prepare a reception for children. And, business students acquire necessary technology and graphic art skills to prepare reception publications.

The action phase of this project takes place both before and during the book party, an event that serves as both action and celebration. In this phase, language arts students create, peer-edit, revise, and prepare children’s books for publication. Art students illustrate the books. Then, the books are presented to first-grade teachers at the book party. Drama students select stories appropriate for performance, prepare their performances, and perform at the book party. Business students create invitations, programs, and nametags for the book party. Foods students prepare and host the book party reception and parenting students assist with management of child behavior at the book party and reception.

The reflection phase of the project takes place both during and after the book party. During the book party, students are encouraged to talk with their young guests and to observe their reactions to the performances and book presentations. After the book party, students formally write about and discuss their experiences as participants in the “Publishing Books for Children” project.

Finally, the celebration phase of the project occurs when first-grade and pre-K students are invited to attend the book party. Also, parents, administrators, and community members are invited. At the book party, authors and artists are recognized as their books are donated to first-grade classes. Also, students are recognized with certificates of participation in the project. Then, drama students perform adaptations of selected stories complete with detailed costumes, sets, and audience participation. After the performances, all guests enjoy a reception prepared by foods students. Reception foods represent the characters or objects in the performed and donated stories. During the reception, authors and artists visit with the young children, sign their books, and read to them. The excitement expressed by the young children is unequalled.

The “Publishing Books for Children” project is designed to meet the curriculum objectives of individual courses. The diverse project objectives are as follows:

- To have students assess and meet the needs of the community in which they live.
- To collect elementary and secondary schools in a community partnership.
- To have students develop a sense of civic responsibility in a democratic society.
- To have secondary school students recognize the importance of reading to children.
- To have students connect their school learning to community service activities and workplace skills.

- To give students opportunities for authentic publication, performance, and presentation.
- To have students develop an appropriate awareness of, and skill in using, the process of constructive critique.
- To have language arts students recognize the importance of genre in writing.
- To have language arts students recognize, evaluate, and write for a designated and real audience, purpose, and writing situation
- To have business students develop skills in graphic arts, technology, and presentation of information for specific audiences.
- To have visual art students experiment with and improve their skills in the art of illustration and interpretation of story elements.
- To have visual art students create products for a particular audience and purpose.
- To have parenting students acquire the skills needed to manage small children in a theater setting.
- To have drama students recognize the importance of audience to performance and to recognize the importance of interaction with an audience of children..
- To have drama students develop appropriate scenery, costumes, and makeup for a short performance for children.
- To have drama students perform for a real audience and develop physical awareness appropriate for performance.
- To have foods students demonstrate the necessary culinary and planning skills to prepare a reception for children including consideration of safety, chemical interactions, and aesthetic appeal and to have foods students gain experience in serving children.

This project's interdisciplinary scope is innovative in nature and its emphasis on the real audience and publication quality work promotes excellence in student achievement.

**2. List the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards,\* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.**

“Publishing Books for Children” is a broad-based, interdisciplinary project, which promotes high student achievement in a variety of specific Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), including Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards(CCWRS), Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Standards, Language Arts Literacy Standards, Science Standards, and Social Studies Standards.

Students involved in “Publishing Books for Children” collaborate to learn and implement skills that encourage the development of children’s reading skills (CCWRS: 3, 4 CCCS: 1.2, 2.3, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5). The project provides our students with opportunities to reinforce their creative writing (CCWRS: 2, 3, 4 CCCS: 2.4, 3.2, 3.3) and illustrating (CCWRS: 1, 2 CCCS: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 2.4, 3.4, 3.5) skills, as they design original books for young children and plan a presentation (CCWRS: 3, 4, 5 CCCS: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5) for young audiences. The culminating event for this project is an annual children’s book party, hosted by the foods and parenting classes (CCWRS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 CCCS: 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.6, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 5.6, 5.8), to celebrate and showcase the books created by high school students enrolled in English and art classes. At the reception, drama students transform these creative stories into exciting plays as they perform the children’s stories for groups of young students in a township elementary school (CCWRS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 CCCS: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 2.5, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5). Invitations, programs, nametags, and other publications needed for the book party are created by business classes (CCWRS: 1, 2, 3, 4 CCCS: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 3.3, 3.5, 5.4). Also, as a Service-Learning project, “Publishing Books for Children”

raises awareness of community service as a component of democratic citizenship (CCCS: 6.1).

The above indicates current use of Core Content Standards in the “Publishing Books for Children” project. In addition, this project is structured in such a way that it can increase its scope each time it is replicated. All disciplines interested in participating in the project can locate an area in which to showcase their skills. For example, in the future, home arts students could sew soft books to donate to younger students, art students could create banners, and content area teachers and students could contribute to the development of the stories in order to teach particular concepts relevant to their fields (i.e. a book about water conservation or Native American settlements). While the project is currently broad-based and comprehensive in nature, it also offers opportunities for expansion or individualization based on availability of resources, such as interested participants.

**3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.**

In many schools, students learn skills that seem disconnected from society. Therefore, one of the educational needs of our students is to recognize the connection between the school and the community as well as the connection between the school and the workplace. Students also need to develop the ability to make connections between skills learned in different content areas.

In addition, our students need to enhance their critical-thinking skills in the areas of communication, research, and problem-solving. Finally, our students need to develop appropriate concepts of active citizenship so that they are not just acquiring knowledge from their classes; they are learning appropriate ways to use their learning to give back to the community.

As a Service-Learning project, “Publishing Books for Children” provides an opportunity for students to connect their learning to meaningful, real life situations. This outcome has been assessed in a variety of different forms, including oral and written student reflections. For example, one student wrote, “The writing of my book was challenging. It was difficult to speak the language of the kids. ...However, I did enjoy the writing process. ...At the actual reception, I was amazed at how thrilled the kids were to meet me, since I was the author....” Another student wrote, “I’m happy to know that I could possibly make a difference in a little kid’s life, and help them develop a joy of reading.”

In addition to assessment data generated by student reflections, the school district has developed an assessment component to the Service-Learning manual. This assessment guide provides samples of objective assessment tools that can be used in individual classrooms to assess the extent to which curricular objectives have been met through participation in Service-Learning projects. The guide uses the “Publishing Books for Children” project as a model of a fully interdisciplinary project and provides rubrics to assess each current component of the project as well as suggestions for future assessment of possible added components. For example, the guide includes a sample rubric developed cooperatively by Language Arts students and their teacher for the assessment of the written portion of the children’s book. The rubric is developed after the students engage in a discussion with a childcare professional and includes criteria such as appropriate simplicity, appropriate subject, character development, appropriate length, creativity, and theme development with specific characteristics and point values listed for each criterion. Using this rubric, students score and revise their own writing until it is of publishable quality. There is significant emphasis on revision and excellence. Finally, the stories are submitted for grading and publishing. All student grades are above average for this assignment, with most students receiving scores in the ‘A’ range.

In addition, there is a correlative relationship between this project and a dramatic increase in Grade 11 HSPT results. The number of students passing the writing portion of the test increased from 93.5% in 1999 to 97.8% in 2000 and 99.0% in 2001. This is a 5.5% increase over

three years. Reading performance increased from 90.3% in 1999 to 95.6% in 2000 and 98.5% in 2001. This is an 8.2% increase over three years.

Feedback from the elementary schools also indicates a successful project. Since the project's inception, first-grade teachers have inquired as to its replication and have demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm. Teachers report that the first-graders read the student-created books over and over again during their free time and that the project facilitates lessons about locating the authors and illustrators of books, a necessary skill for early elementary students. In addition, first-grade students have created thank you booklets illustrating their memories from the book party, including the dramatic performances and reception. It is clear that the "Publishing Books for Children" project makes a lasting impact on the elementary school students as well as on the high school students.

#### **4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.**

The school was recognized in 2000 as one of sixty-six Service-Learning Leader Schools nationwide. This role places our school in a unique position to facilitate the replication of Service-Learning projects like "Publishing Books for Children" in other schools and districts. As part of our leadership vision, we have proposed the following programs to promote the replication of projects: a student/faculty/community Service-Learning Council, a partnership among district schools in which representatives from our district's three high schools engage in joint planning sessions and joint service projects, training sessions that have already been presented to students and faculty of other schools, and technology (i.e. website, e-mail, and Powerpoint presentation) to foster statewide, national, and international collaboration.

As detailed above, projects at our school have a high potential for replication because there is great support for schools to become involved. Our school makes the following recommendations for replication of the "Publication Books for Children" program.

The project developer should:

- Develop a project vision and determine the scope of your involvement in the project. This scope should be consistent with curricular objectives. (i.e. The vision is to write, illustrate, and perform children's stories. As an English teacher, my scope includes only the writing component.)
- Determine which areas of the project are outside of your scope of involvement, but are essential to the project's success. (i.e. art, drama)
- Form a team of colleagues from different content areas to become involved in various areas of the project, beginning with the content areas you consider essential.
- Brainstorm to generate a list of content areas that could add additional value to the project. Add to your team. Expand your vision. (i.e. parenting, foods, business, etc.)
- Based on the expanded vision, generate a list of project elements that need to be completed. (i.e. Write, illustrate, perform, prepare reception, prepare publications, manage students.)
- Divide these project elements among team members based on curricular objectives.
- List skills needed to complete project elements. Align these skills with Core Curriculum Content Standards. Create assessment tools.
- Have team members teach the skills relevant to their content areas that students need in order to complete project elements. This is the preparation phase.
- Have students complete the project elements in the action and celebration phases of the project. (i.e. Prepare the books and have the book party.)
- Assess student achievement.
- Provide opportunities for all students to reflect on their involvement in the project.

Project developers are encouraged to use creativity and all available resources to customize an interdisciplinary project that meets the needs of the individual school.